

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3 November 2011 commencing at 5.30 pm

Present: Cllr. P Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Mrs P Bosley, Cllr. Mrs E Bracken, Cllr. Mrs C Clark,
Cllr Mrs J Davison, Cllr. Mrs A Hunter and Cllr. B Ramsey

Cllr. C Clark were also present

40. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 October 2011 be approved and signed as a correct record.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

42. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

There were no questions from Members.

43. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE AND/OR SELECT COMMITTEES

(a) Annual Review of Parking Charges 2012/13 and Christmas Parking 2011
– (*Environment Select Committee - 25 October 2011*)

This was considered under minute item 44 below.

(b) Cleaning of Private Streets – (*Environment Select Committee – 25 October 2011*)

This was considered under minute item 45 below.

44. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES 2012/13 AND CHRISTMAS PARKING 2011

The Portfolio Holder for the Cleaner and Greener Environment presented the Annual Review of Parking Charges and outlined options for increases in respect of car park and on-street parking charges to meet the budget plan for 2012/13. The budget plan increase for parking for 2012/13 had been set at 2.5% and the options included in the report would enable this to be achieved or a higher rate of increase applied if Members so wished. The options were outlined in the report and attention was drawn to the historic information relating to car parking charges and to the charges applied by neighbouring

authorities. Members were reminded that the Council's car parks were subject to business rates of over £215,000 pa and that the business rate liability was already £13,000 over budget for the current financial year and in looking at options for charges the increased cost to the Council of providing car parking should be taken into account. In formulating the options for consideration by the Cabinet care had been taken to balance the need to raise revenue to cover the costs of providing car parking with the need to encourage people to shop in Sevenoaks. For this reason no increases were proposed for short stay car parking. The Cabinet was reminded of the need to maintain the charging differential between the Blighs car park and the other short stay car parks in the town centre and that it was not proposed to increase evening car park charges or to introduce charges for using the car parks on Sundays.

The options for increases to charges for On-Street parking were contained in Appendix D to the report but in view of the standardisation of charging structures introduced in 2011/12 the only changes proposed related to the long stay charges and to permit costs with the exception of a suggested amendment to the Swanley tariff structure which had not been standardised. It was proposed that the revised charges for Swanley should also be applied for the parking scheme at Knockholt station and that a new 4 hour tariff should be introduced in the pay and display areas around Sevenoaks station on the same cost rate as Swanley and Knockholt station. The Cabinet was reminded that any changes to car parking charges would require changes to the relevant parking places and traffic regulation orders and that these would be subject to statutory public consultation. Members were also asked to consider repeating the free Saturday parking concession on the two Saturdays before Christmas and that as Christmas Eve fell on a Saturday this year to consider whether to allow free parking on the two preceding Saturdays.

The Cabinet had regard to the recommendations of the Environment Select Committee which had considered this matter on 25 October 2011. The Cabinet noted the need to adopt a fair approach to parking charges to cover the costs to Council tax payers of providing parking with the needs of shoppers and other users. It was also felt that the requirements set out in the Council's four year savings budget should be respected. The Cabinet felt that the increases under consideration, on average, were below the current rate of inflation and that there had also been service improvements such as the introduction of the facility to pay for parking by telephone. Members also highlighted the availability of Business Parking Permits which offered parking at a discounted rate. In considering the options for Swanley the Cabinet also felt that it was important for charges to be standardised across the District as far as possible and that the proposals for increases in charges for use of the Council's car parks and for on-street parking were in alignment. Members supported the proposal to introduce a new 4 hour tariff for Sevenoaks commuters but the Cabinet did not feel that the tariff for on-street parking in the area around Knockholt station should be changed as a new parking scheme had only been implemented at the beginning of October 2011 and was due for review in six months time.

The Cabinet supported the proposals to provide free car parking on two Saturday's before Christmas and hoped that this would encourage people to

shop in Sevenoaks. The Cabinet also noted that free car parking would also be available on the evening of 25 November 2011 when the Christmas lights would be turned on.

Resolved: That

- (1) car parking charges for 2012/13 as identified in the table in Appendix C to the report be increased as follows:

the following items by Option 1: 1.2, 1.3, 1.6, and 1.7

the following items by Option 2: 1.4, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 3.5, 4.5, and 5.5

the following items by Option 3: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4

and that in addition residents permits be increased in line with on-street residents permits; all subject to consultation as noted in the report.

- (2) on-street parking charges for 2012/13 as identified in the table in Appendix D to the report be increased as follows:

the following items by Option 1: 10.1, 10.3, 10.4, 12.1, 13.1, 14.1 and 14.2

the following items by Option 2: 7.4 and 12.3

the following items by Option 3: 8.4, 10.5, 12.2, 12.4, 13.2 and 13.3

subject to consultation as noted in the report.

- (3) the proposed changes to the on-street tariff structure in respect to Swanley and the Sevenoaks rail commuter areas be approved, subject to consultation; and

- (4) free parking be provided for Christmas 2011 in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district on Saturdays 10th and 17th December and that the Council be recommended to fund the cost identified in the report from Supplementary Estimates.

45. CLEANING OF PRIVATE STREETS

The Portfolio Holder for The Cleaner and Greener Environment presented a report which proposed that the Council should cease to clean the private streets which it currently cleaned free of charge. The Cabinet was reminded that the street cleaning budget for 2011/12 had been cut by £162,000 which had resulted in a reduction of four operatives, one supervisor and revised cleaning schedules. The proposals would allow the Council to focus its resources on cleaning those streets for which it had statutory responsibility and would also ensure that an equitable approach would be taken towards the cleaning of all private streets across the District as the Council did not provide this service for other private streets free of charge. It was proposed that the Council could still offer a service to clean these private streets on a chargeable basis at the same hourly rate as the service currently offered to

other private streets.

The Cabinet had regard to the views of the Environment Select Committee on 25 October 2011 which supported the proposal to withdraw the free service and to offer to continue to clean the streets on request on a chargeable basis.

Resolved: That

(1) the residents in the private roads listed in the Appendix to the report be advised that, with effect from 1 April 2012, the Council will no longer be able to clean these streets free of charge; and

(2) the Council offer to clean these streets from 1 April 2012 only on a chargeable basis.

46. KENT & MEDWAY INVESTMENT FUND

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Value for Money presented a report which sought Members views on the invitation from Kent County Council (KCC) for District and Borough Councils to participate in the proposed Kent and Medway Investment Fund. The Fund would be established as a limited partnership with a Fund Manager and would provide an investment opportunity for all councils in the County as well as making a supply of funding available for development and regeneration projects across Kent and attracting development to the county. KCC had commissioned a feasibility study from CBRE consultants to develop proposals based on the Evergreen Fund set up in the North West. Each District was being asked to make a non-refundable contribution of £25,000 to the next phase of development of the proposed Fund with Medway contributing £50,000 and KCC up to £500,000. It was possible that other investors such as the Kent Pension Fund and the Homes and Communities Agency might wish to participate. This phase of the work would involve drawing up an investment strategy and terms of partnership. After this phase the Council would be invited to make an investment contribution to the Fund of £2m in cash or property for an investment period of 10 years. The consultants had indicated that the rate of return would depend upon the level of risk adopted as part of the investment strategy but could be as high as 10-12%, a far higher level of return than being earned from the Council's current investments.

The report stressed that the primary purpose of the Fund was to enable regeneration as well as delivering financial returns. Local regeneration projects could benefit from the Fund, however there were no guarantees as the Fund Manager would ensure that funding was targeted at schemes which best met the Fund's objectives, were fully deliverable and offered the best returns. It was unlikely that projects in areas not participating in the Scheme would receive funding. Whilst it would be possible to join the Fund at a later stage this would involve an equalisation payment in order to compensate original partners for their higher rate of risk. Members were reminded that this proposal did not meet the criteria in the Council's current investment strategy whereby investments were limited to those counterparties with a long term credit rating of at least AA- and that investments were in place for a maximum

of one year. The Investment Strategy would therefore have to be amended should the Council wish to invest in the Fund.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Value for Money explained that this item had been considered by the Finance Advisory Group (FAG) on 2 November 2011. FAG had considered that the proposal was not wholly viable in that the Fund was ostensibly seeking to deliver both the best rate of return on investment and also to promote regeneration and that it was unlikely that both of these objectives could be delivered. FAG were not convinced that any of the regeneration funding would be used to support regeneration needs in Sevenoaks. FAG also considered that the Fund was a high risk investment, reflected by its lack of a credit rating, and would involve making an investment of £2m in cash or property and that the ownership of any assets put into the Fund would transfer to the Fund and would not be returned. It also felt that the proposed level of investment would have to come out of the General Fund Reserve which would run contrary to the current Investment Strategy of low risk investment and that the Fund management fee was higher than the industry norm. FAG had also questioned the possible use of the KCC Pension Fund for the scheme.

The Cabinet agreed that it was unlikely that the district would gain regeneration funding from the Fund and that the rates of return could be much less than the figure stated. Cabinet considered that the Fund represented a high risk investment which would require both up-front investment to proceed to the next phase of the project and then tie up £2m for a 10 year period contrary to the Council's approach to investment. It was felt that the Fund would be unlikely to be able to deliver the twin objectives of regeneration and the best rate of return on investment. The Cabinet was also extremely concerned about the possibility of the KCC Pension Fund investing in the scheme given that the Council did not wish to invest in the Kent and Medway Investment Fund and that Sevenoaks contributed to the KCC Pension Fund. The Leader of the Council stated that he would write to the Leader of KCC to express these strong concerns.

Resolved: That the Council should not participate in the Kent and Medway Investment Fund for the reasons stated at the meeting.

47. PROGRESS ON 2012/13 BUDGET - VERBAL UPDATE

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources informed the Cabinet that work on developing the budget for 2012/13 was on track. Budget proposals and Service Plans had already been considered by two of the Select Committees and would be considered by the Services Select Committee on 8 November.

48. APPOINTMENT TO THE KENT FLOOD MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Cabinet was advised that Kent County Council had invited the Council to appoint a representative to serve on its Kent Flood Management Committee, which had been set up in response to recommendations arising from the Pitt Review into the floods of Summer 2007.

Resolved: That Councillor Scholey be appointed as the Council's representative on the Kent Flood Management Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Implementation of Decisions

This notice was published on 7 November 2011. The decisions contained in minutes 44, 45 and 46 take effect on 15 November 2011. All other decisions take effect immediately.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 6.19 pm

Chairman